

Message Text

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ACTION AF-08

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EUR-12 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 SSC-01 AID-05 IO-13 CU-02 /087 W
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FM AMEMBASSY PORT LOUIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6404

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 PORT LOUIS 0053

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR PINT PGOV MP
SUBJECT: MAURITIUS WEEKLY REVIEW - JANUARY 21

REF: PORT LOUIS 0031

SUMMARY: PORT LOUIS 0051 PROVIDES A SUMMARY OF THIS
CABLE. END SUMMARY

1. HEERALALL BHUGALOO GAVE A PRESS CONFERENCE ON JANUARY 18
TO EXPLAIN HIS DECISION OF LAST WEEK TO RESIGN AS EDUCATION
MINISTER AND AS A LABOR MEMBER OF THE ASSEMBLY (REFTEL),
BUT HE DID NOT FULLY CLARIFY WHAT LAY BEHIND HIS SURPRISING
ACTION. HE DENIED ALL THE REASONS THAT HAVE BEEN SPECULATED
FOR HIS RESIGNATION: TO MAKE WAY FOR JAGATSINGH TO RE-
PLACE HIM, BECUASE OF SHEILA BAPPPOO'S SUIT AGAINST HSI
ELECTION, BECUASE OF DIFFICULTIES IN RUNNING HIS MINISTRY.
HE CASTIGATED JAGATSINGH BY NAME. BHUGALOO DID DETAIL HIS
DISGUST WITH THE LABOR PARTY, ITS LACK OF DEMOCRATIC
PROCEDURES, THE SHAMELESS WAY IT CHOSE ITS CANDIDATES,
ITS INTRIGUES, BACK-BITING, CORRUPTION AND HYPOCRISY, THE
AUTOCRATIC WAY THE PARTY IS RUN, AND THE WAY THE PEOPLE'S
INTERESTS ARE NEGLECTED AFTER THE ELECTIONS ARE OVER.
ACCORDING TO BHUGALOO, THE COALITION WITH THE PMSD
WAS DECREED FROM ABOVE WITHOUT ANY CONSULTATION. HE ALSO
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SPOKE OF BEING STABBED IN THE BACK BY POLITICAL ASSOCIATES
(NAMELY, JAMES BURTY DAVID, HIS RUNNING MATE) AND OF HAVING
HIS INTEGRITY QUESTIONED. YET HE HAD NOTHING GOOD TO SAY
ABOUT ANY OTHER POLITICAL PARTY. HIS RESIGNATION WAS
BASED ON PRINCIPLE, HE SAID, AND TO PRESERVE HIS FREEDOM
OF ACTION. HE ALSO WANTED TO "GIVE PUBLIC OPINION A
SHOCK." HE IS OBVIOUSLY NOT DESERTING POLITICS BUT POSITION-

ING HIMSELF FOR THE NEXT ROUND. BHUGALOO, WHO IS DIRECTOR OF A SECONDARY SCHOOL, RECOMMENDED THAT ALL SCHOOLS BE NATIONALIZED SINCE THEY ARE NOW FULLY SUBSIDIZED BY THE GOVERNMENT THROUGH ITS NEW SYSTEM OF FREE EDUCATION FOR ALL. HE SEVERELY CRITICIZED THE RELIGIOUS SCHOOLS FOR PRACTICING DISCRIMINATION AGAINST CHILDREN OF THE WORKING CLASS.

2. ON JANUARY 19 THE ELECTORAL SUPERVISORY COMMISSION NAMED KHER JAGATSINGH TO FILL THE ASSEMBLY SEAT VACATED BY BHUGALOO. JAGATSINGH, WHO IS SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE LABOR PARTY, WAS THE BEST PERFORMER AMONG THE DEFEATED HINDU LABOR CANDIDATES IN THE DECEMBER 20 ELECTIONS. HE IS EXPECTED TO BE NAMED TO A CABINET POSITION SHORTLY BY THE PRIME MINISTER, PERHAPS TO HIS FORMER PORTFOLIO OF PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (ALTHOUGH RABIN GHURBURRUN, WHO NOW OCCUPIES THAT POST, IS UNLIKELY TO GIVE IT UP WILLINGLY).

3. THE MAURITIAN MILITANT MOVEMENT (MMM) HAD EARLIER WITHDRAWN ITS INJUNCTION AGAINST THE NAMING OF A REPLACEMENT FOR BHUGALOO AFTER THE ATTORNEY GENERAL GAVE ASSURANCES THAT THE REPLACEMENT WOULD BE REMOVED IN FAVOR OF MRS. SHEILA BAPPOO SHOULD THE LATTER WIN HER VOTE RECOUNT SUIT AGAINST BHUGALOO'S ELECTIONS.

4. IN A SPEECH IN ARSENAL ON JANUARY 18, PRIME MINISTER RAMGOOLAM REVEALED THAT THE MMM HAD PROPOSED TO FORM A COALITION GTVERNMENT WITH LABOR FOLLOWING THE DECEMBER CONFIDENTIAL

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ELECTIONS, BUT ON CONDITION THAT RAM MOVE UP TO THE PRESIDENCY OF A REPUBLIC AND TURN THE GOVERNMENT OVER TO THE MMM. RAM SAID THIS PROPOSAL HAD BEEN MADE TO HIM BY PAUL VERGES, HEAD OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF REUNION ISLAND, ON BEHALF OF THE MMM, AND HE HAD REJECTED THE IDEA. THE PRIME MINISTER SAID IT WAS INCONCEIVABLE THAT HE WOULD FORM A COALITION WITH THOSE WHO HAVE ALWAYS SABOTAGED THE ECONOMY OF THE COUNTRY. HE HAD FORMED ONE WITH THE PMSD NOT TO GLORIFY THE CAPITALISTS BUT BECAUSE THAT PARTY WAS WILLING TO HELP GOVERN THE COUNTRY IN PEACE AND ORDER. RAM REJECTED THE IDEA THAT GENERAL ELECTIONS WILL BE HELD WITHIN SIX MONTHS AND ADMITTED THAT HIS PARTY HAD LOST SOME SEATS "STUPIDLY" IN THE LAST ROUND. HE SAID NATIONALIZATION WAS NO SOLUTION TO THE COUNTRY'S PROBLEMS BUT WOULD BRING MISERY AND CHAOS, AS HAS HAPPENED IN MADAGASCAR. RAM ALSO APPEARED TO RETREAT FROM HIS PROMISE

OF A 40-HOUR WORK WEEK, MADE IN THE SPEECH FROM THE THRONE, IN SAYING THAT THIS CHANGE WOULD HAVE SERIOUS

REPERCUSSIONS FOR THE MAURITIAN ECONOMY.

5. PMSD LEADER GAETAN DUVAL, ADDRESSING A CROWD OF 3,000 PARTY SYMPATHIZERS IN CUREPIPE ON JANUARY 16, ANNOUNCED HIS DECISION TO REMAIN AS PARTY LEADER. HE SAID THE PRESENT COALITION WITH THE LABOR PARTY WAS THE RESULT OF THE PEOPLE'S CHOICE IN THE RECENT ELECTIONS, WHEREAS HE HAD FORMED THE COALITION OF 1969 WITH RAMGOOLAM "AGAINST THE WILL OF THE

PEOPLE." HE SAID THE PARTY SHOULD PREPARE ITSELF FOR AN ALLIANCE WITH LABOR, AND CALLED ON ALL WHO SUPPORT THE PMSD TO BE LOYAL TO THE COALITION AND SINCERE IN THEIR RELATIONS WITH LABOR. THE APPOINTMENT OF PMSD PEOPLE TO THE MUNICIPALITIES WAS ONLY FAIR, DUVAL SAID, SINCE THEY HAD BEEN REMOVED FROM OFFICE IN 1973 AS A RESULT OF THE BREAK-UP OF THE FORMER COALITION. BUT, IN VIEW OF THE CRITICISM OF THEIR OPPONENTS, THE PMSD WOULD DISCARD THE CONFIDENTIAL

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IDEA OF PMSD APPOINTEES AND INSTEAD CALL FOR EARLY MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS. DUVAL SAID THE PMSD NEEDS TO REORGANIZE NATIONALLY AND HE ATTRIBUTED THE GOOD SHOWING OF THE MMM IN DECEMBER TO THEIR NINE YEARS OF HARD WORK AND SUPERIOR ORGANIZATIONS.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 PORT LOUIS 0053

6. ADDRESSING AN IMPRESSIVE CROWD OF 50,000 AT A NATIONAL PARTY MEETING IN PORT LOUIS ON JANURAY 16, MMM SECRETARY

GENERAL PAUL BERENGER LISTED THE SIX POST-ELECTORAL OBJECTIVES OF THE MMM: (1) PREPARING, ORGANIZATIONALLY AND FINANCIALLY, FOR THE NEXT LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS, WHICH ARE BOUND TO BE HELD SOON; (2) PREPARING FOR MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS; (3) RESTRUCTURING OF THE MMM AND THE GENERAL WORKERS FEDERATION ON A BASIS OF REGIONAL COMMITTEES; (4) EXERTING PRESSURE ON THE GOVERNMENT TO CARRY OUT THE CAMPAIGN PROMISES OF LABOR AND THE PMSD; (5) INTERVENING WITH THE AUTHORITIES TO SEE TO IT THAT THE RIGHT OF ACCESS OF THE MMM TO RADIO AND TV TIME IS RESPECTED; (6) MAKING A TOUR OF AFRICAN COUNTRIES (BY HIMSELF) TO INFORM OAU MEMBERS ABOUT THE SITUATION IN MAURITIUS RESULTING FROM FORMATION OF THE NEW "REACTIONARY" COALITION GOVERNMENT. BERENGER SAID THE PARTY WOULD ORGANIZE PROTEST DEMONSTRATIONS IF PMSD PEOPLE ARE APPOINTED TO RUN THE MUNICIPALITIES. HE PREDICTED THERE WOULD BE NEW GENERAL ELECTIONS WITHIN ONE YEAR, AND MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS WITHIN SIX MONTHS. BERENGER DEPARTED JANUARY 18 ON A TRIP TO REUNION, MADAGASCAR, TANZANIA AND THE SEYCHELLES.

7. OKMA HAWOLDAR, LEADER OF THE SOCIALIST PROGRESSIVE PARTY, GAVE A PRESS INTERVIEW IN WHICH HE SAID HIS PARTY STILL EXISTS, WILL BE THE SUCCESSOR TO THE LABOR PARTY WHICH IS CONFIDENTIAL

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ITS PARENT, WILL PRESENT CANDIDATES FOR ALL 62 SEATS IN THE NEXT ELECTIONS, AND WILL WIN A TWO-THIRDS MAJORITY. AS FOR THE PARTY'S PROGRAM, ALL HE WOULD SAY IS THAT THEIR FIRST ACT WOULD BE TO "BURN THE CONSTITUTION" WHICH IS THE CAUSE OF THE COUNTRY'S POLITICAT, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL TROUBLES. ASKED IF HE WOULD ACCEPT A LABOR PARTY CANDIDACY NEXT TIME, HAWOLDAR SAID HIS PARTY WOULD PERHAPS OFFER SOME SPACES ON ITS LIST TO EX-LABOR PEOPLE. ACCORDING TO HAWOLDAR, BOTH LABOR AND THE MMM PLAYED THE COMMUNAL AND CASTE GAME, WHICH, HE SAYS, IS THE REAL PROBLEM OF MAURITIAN POLITICS AND WHICH HE DEPLORES.

8. MINISTER OF PLANNING GHURBURRUN, IN A FRENCH TV INTERVIEW, BLAMED THE MUSLIM COMMITTEE OF ACTION (CAM) FOR THE INDEPENDENCE PARTY'S ELECTORAL LOSS TO THE MMM. CAM LEADER MOHAMED RETORTED TO THE PRESS THAT IT WAS GHURBURRUN WHO WAS RESPONSIBLE, AS HE HAD IMPOSED "CASTE-ISM" ON THE LABOR PARTY. MOHAMED LODGED A PROTEST WITH RAMGOOLAM AND OTHER LABOR PARTY LEADERS OVER GHURBURRUN'S REMARKS. IN THE SAME INTERVIEW GHURBURRUN SAID THE LABOR-PMSD COALITION IS "UNNATURAL" BUT WAS NECESSARY TO BLOCK THE MMM. HE DESCRIBED THE PMSD AS THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE LARGE CAPITALIST INTERESTS. IN A CONVERSATION WITH THE AMBASSADOR ON JANUARY 20 GHURBURRUN DENIED THAT HE HAD CRITICIZED THE CAM IN HIS TV INTERVIEW. BUT, HE SAID,

WHEN THIS SUBJECT HAD BEEN DISCUSSED IN A MEETING OF THE
LABOR PARTY PARLIAMENTARY GROUP, THE PRIME MINISTER HAD
REMARKED THAT IF GHURBURRUN HAD NOT BLAMED THE CAM SOME-
ONE ELSE SHOULD HAVE, FOR IT WAS ABOUT TIME "TO CALL A
SPADE A SPADE." TWTWTW.

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Message Attributes

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